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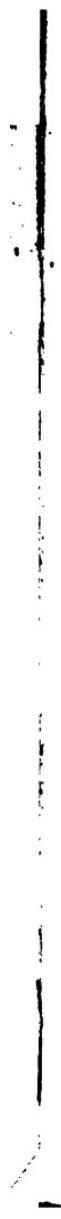
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#19.

Sermons for the Times, No. VI.

THE
OFFICE OF THE CHURCH
AS THE
TEACHER OF THE NATION:

A SERMON, PREACHED, IN OBEDIENCE TO THE QUEEN'S
LETTER, IN AID OF THE FUNDS OF
"THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING THE EDUCATION OF
THE POOR IN THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH,"

IN THE
DISTRICT CHAPEL OF THE
HOLY TRINITY, ROEHAMPTON,

On the Sunday after Ascension Day, May 8th, 1853.

BY THE
REV. G. E. BIBER, LL.D.,
PERPETUAL CURATE OF ROEHAMPTON.

LONDON:
F. AND J. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,
AND WATERLOO-PLACE.

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THE OFFICE OF THE CHURCH

AS THE

TEACHER OF THE NATION.

"Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this Law; for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."—Deut. xxxii. 46, 47.

With this exhortation did Moses, the Servant of God, conclude the charge which he gave to the children of Israel, when, having brought them within sight of the land of promise, and having rehearsed in their ears the Law of God, he was about to be taken from them. They had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt by his hand, had been brought through the wilderness under his guidance, and had been taught the Word of God at his mouth; the Lord having avouched them to be His peculiar people; and Himself to be their God.

The appointment which God so made with regard to His people Israel, through His servant Moses, was not intended to terminate with the ministry of Moses, nor was it binding only upon the generation which received the Divine Law at the mouth of Moses; it was an appointment of an enduring character, to continue for perpetual generations, to be in force upon their children's children to the most distant ages. To them this Law of God was to be made known; the knowledge of it was a precious privilege of which they were not to be defrauded,—obedience to it a sacred obligation from which they could by no means be absolved. "Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the

words of this Law,"⁽¹⁾—was the principle which was to govern the nation in perpetuity; and faithful adherence to this principle was to be the foundation, as well as the condition, of the nation's welfare and prosperity. Hence the exhortation: "*Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this Law; for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.*"

Such, then, was the Divine appointment. Let us now turn to the practical result, as exhibited in the history of the nation thus favoured by God with a knowledge of His will, and bound to Him by the tie of a perpetual allegiance. The most cursory glance over the period of fifteen centuries which elapsed between the day when Moses addressed to the children of Israel the parting exhortation just recited, and the overthrow of the holy city and the dispersion of the nation throughout all the countries of the earth, because "they knew not the time of their visitation," will afford abundant evidence that the condition of this singularly privileged nation, while scarcely at any time answerable to the Divine appointment upon which their whole polity was founded, was often the very reverse of what under that appointment might justly and reasonably have been expected. Even during those happier periods of their history, when the nation as a body was obedient to the Law of God, and when those that bore rule in Israel promoted the knowledge of the Law, and enforced obedience to it, both by precept and example, there was much individual unfaithfulness, much personal transgression; and in each successive generation there were those who had to be reclaimed from the slippery ways of error and of wickedness, and to be instructed in the knowledge and obedience of God's Law. But the most ordinary condition of the nation was of a far more unsatisfactory, a far less promising character. There were seasons when large portions of the nation, not unfrequently the majority, systematically departed from the Law of God. Many turned to the worship of Baal, and to other abominable idolatries; and that at one time to such an extent, that one of the Lord's chosen Prophets imagined that he alone was left a faithful worshipper of the true God. And even when idolatry was

⁽¹⁾ Deut. xxix. 29.

less prevalent, many who adhered to the worship of the true God, set His appointed Ordinances at nought, and worshipped Him, not in the place which He had chosen to put His name there, but in places of their own selection, after a fashion of their own devising. Again there were periods, and that periods of considerable duration, when the Royal authority, though confessedly ordained by God, as an instrument for the national maintenance of His Law, was exerted, not in obedience, but in direct opposition, to God and to His Law. And in the midst of the national unfaithfulness, sanctioned by the Civil Rulers, the Priests and the Prophets too, the Ministers of the Altar and the Teachers of the nation, not unfrequently partook of the general corruption, conforming to the spirit of the times in which they lived, in utter disregard of the sacred trust committed to their hands, and in rebellious resistance of heart to the HOLY GHOST, whose inspiration was vouchsafed to them for the accomplishment of their mission.

And what, then, through all these vicissitudes of partial obedience, and of wide-spread, and sometimes all but universal disobedience, was the effect of the rebellion, the apostasy, of which God's chosen people were guilty, upon the Divine appointment which lay at the foundation of their national polity? Was that appointment ever revoked by God? was its validity ever impaired? Even when the sins of the nation had risen to their utmost height, when the conduct of its Rulers was bidding open defiance to the God of Heaven, when "the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint," when "from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there was no soundness, but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores," was there ever a time when the Divine appointment was abrogated by the fact of the nation's iniquity,—when even a single individual stood absolved, by reason of the general defection, from his own share of the responsibility which rested upon all in common, to preserve the knowledge of the Law of God, and to yield obedience to its requirements? More particularly, was there ever a time when the Civil Rulers stood absolved from their obligation to maintain those principles upon which the whole polity of the nation was founded, and upon which their own authority rested,—on the plea that the majority of the nation had cast off those principles, refused to recognize.

them, or to be guided by them? And, still more, was there ever a time when the Priests stood absolved from the responsibilities of their office, because the majority of the nation would none of their ministrations? or when the Prophets stood absolved from the obligation of delivering the LORD's message to the people, because the heart of the people was waxed gross, and their ears were dull of hearing, and they had closed their eyes? On the contrary, the whole history of the nation of Israel, and the testimony of the LORD borne by His servants the Prophets, is there to attest the fact that the Divine appointment remained in full force, the obligations which it imposed in full validity. The disobedience of the people, so far from furnishing an excuse for dereliction of their sacred duty on the part of the Rulers, on the contrary increased the weight of their responsibility; it was a call upon them to make a mighty effort,—an effort which, whenever made, was invariably attended with success,—to stem the tide of apostasy, of irreligion, of rebellion, and of iniquity, and to recall the nation to the knowledge and obedience of the Law of GOD. And the unwillingness of the people to hear the Word of the LORD at the mouth of His servants the Prophets, the encouragement given to national disobedience by the Civil Rulers, so far from relieving the Prophets from the obligation which lay upon them, to rebuke the nation for its iniquity, and to proclaim the Word of the LORD in the ears of a stiffnecked and adulterous generation, on the contrary rendered the faithful exercise of their office more imperative, the necessity that was laid upon them more stringent. "Son of man," thus runs the Divine command to one of the Prophets at a season of all but universal apostasy, "I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me: they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even unto this very day; for they are impudent children, and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them: 'Thus saith the LORD God.' And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a Prophet among them. And thou, Son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be *with thee*, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of *their words*, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a

rebellious house. And thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious. But thou, Son of man, hear what I say unto thee; be not thou rebellious, like that rebellious house."(²)

The application of these solemn lessons, taught by the history of God's ancient people, and the testimony of His Holy Word, to our own case, to our condition, and our circumstances, is not difficult to make. At a period not less, if not more, remote than was the date of the establishment of God's kingdom in Israel when the judgment of God overtook that people because "they knew not the time of their visitation," the foundations of this kingdom were laid in the Word and Ordinance of God. The earliest traditions of our national history show us the Church of God, the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, established in this land; they exhibit to us its Civil Rulers, its Kings,—whether they were many, bearing sway over different portions of the land, or whether the supreme power was concentrated in one hand,—as the LORD's Anointed, solemnly consecrated to the Regal office by the hands of the successors of the Apostles. The constitution of the Church, the principles of the Divine Law, are found, up to the remotest antiquity to which our national monuments and records enable us to ascend, incorporated with the Law of the land. Ever since their emancipation from the darkness of barbarism and heathenism, the people of this land have borne allegiance to CHRIST, and the Church of CHRIST has been the Divinely appointed Teacher of the nation. True, the history of this nation has not been, any more than the history of the nation of Israel, always answerable to that high calling, according to which "those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law." The conduct of this nation, the conduct of its Rulers, the conduct of the stewards of God's mysteries, of its Divinely commissioned Teachers, has often presented a painful contrast to the requirement of the exhortation: "*Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this Law; for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.*" We have had periods

(²) Ezek. ii. 3—8.

of prevailing idolatry, seasons of religious self-will and rebellion, days of abounding iniquity. Our present condition is far from what it ought to be. Idolatry is rearing its head afresh in our land; religious selfwill, the spirit of rebellion, is rife amongst us; iniquity of every kind does abound. God's law is set at defiance in many ways; his Ordinance is much dishonoured, and by many systematically set at nought. The Civil Power, under the changes incident to our mixed form of government, is often, and of late years more usually, found in the hands of those that "have evil will at Sion," to whom the bare assertion of a Divine commission of the Ministry, of a spiritual authority vested in the Church, and of a Catholic Faith to be maintained in opposition to all error, heresy, and schism, is an offence; not unnaturally so, for it must be confessed that the assertion of these principles has become extremely inconvenient, seeing they are diametrically opposed to the principle adopted by the Civil Legislature, which, instead of simply abolishing the use of carnal weapons to enforce compliance with God's Word and Ordinance, in matters of Faith, as inconsistent with the character of a spiritual dispensation, has committed power in the government of the State to the hands of those who are the enemies of the true Church, and of the true Faith of CHRIST, and has thereby debarred itself from the adoption of the principles of the true Faith as the guiding principles of its conduct, as well as from hearty cooperation with the true Church of CHRIST. Nor is it in the government of the State alone that the principles of God's Word and Ordinance, which are the fundamental principles of our national polity, are lamentably departed from; in God's Church itself, and especially among those who bear His commission, whose lips should "keep knowledge," and from whose mouth "the law of truth," ought to proceed, there is much deplorable unfaithfulness, much shrinking from a bold declaration of the whole counsel of God, much deceitful handling of the Word of God, much trusting in "an arm of flesh," and "in the heart departing from the LORD."

It were vain, and not vain only, but sinful, to disguise these facts. No man can honestly set before his eyes, on the one hand, the Word of God, the principles revealed in that Word, which are the principles held by the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic *Church from the beginning*, and, as such, are the fundamental

principles of our national polity,—and, on the other hand, the present social, political, and religious condition of this nation, without being painfully alive to the contrast between the two. And then comes the all-important question,—the question at which so many have stumbled in our day,—what is the practical conclusion which we are to draw from the existence of this contrast? Shall we, as the manner of some is, turn aside altogether, declaring that “it is vain to serve God?” Or shall we, as is the practice of too many, act upon the assumption that in the general confusion every man may do “whatsoever is right in his own eyes?” Or shall we, as some have been found to do, on the plea of an alleged failure of God’s Truth and Ordinance in His Church, go and “fall down to the stock of a tree,” and “make cakes and burn incense to the Queen of Heaven?” Or, if we are not so far lost to all sense of what is right, as to rush into such extremes of error and irreligion, if we are resolved, with the help of God’s grace, to continue in the true Faith, and in reverent submission to God’s true Ordinance, are we, according to the prevailing fashion of the day, ready to succumb to the evil that is in the world, looking upon the Divine appointment on which the throne of this kingdom and the polity of this nation is founded, as virtually abrogated? or are we prepared, in the face of a hostile world, to maintain the continued validity of that Divine appointment, the continued, the undiminished, nay the increased obligation which in the present lamentable state of this nation rests upon the Church, still to uphold and to proclaim the Truth of God, as the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church has received the same; still to recognize,—even though it be repudiated by the majority of the people, and by the State itself,—yea, and to the utmost of her power to exercise, her office as the Teacher of the nation, in accordance with the exhortation,—“*Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this Law; for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life?*”

It is on the answer to this question that the whole issue turns in that great controversy which has disturbed the State and agitated the Church these fourteen years, the controversy touching National Education. Shall we deduce the rule of our conduct from the principles which by Divine appointment are the funda-

mental principles of our national life,—or shall we set aside the Divine appointment, as a thing that has become obsolete, and is virtually, if not formally, abrogated, and deduce the rule of our conduct from that evil state of things which disobedience to God's Word and Ordinance has entailed upon us? Since we have to deal with untoward facts, are we to take the rule by which we are to deal with those facts, at the mouth of God, or shall we take it at the mouth of the world, framing our rule of action in accordance with those very facts, those evil facts, with which we have to deal? This is the real question,—a question most apposite to the present occasion, because on the answer to it will depend, not only whether we ought to give our support to the Society on whose behalf I am this day called upon to appeal to your Christian liberality, but in what measure, according to our ability, and, above all, in what spirit, that support ought to be given.

The true answer to the question proposed is not difficult to find, if we bring to the consideration of it "an honest and good heart;" if we be sincerely desirous to "prove what is," in regard to this matter, "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." If we consult the precedent of God's dealings with His ancient people, the answer is ready to our hands. No amount of national iniquity and apostasy could, or did, nullify the Divine appointment; on the contrary, its continued validity was fearfully demonstrated by the Divine vengeance which overtook, and still continues to pursue, His rebellious people. Or if, abstracting from that precedent, we reflect upon the nature of the case, bringing plain common sense to bear upon the question, the answer will be the same. If God has a Church, and a Truth, the principles of which were, in the order of His Providence, made the foundation of this nation's polity,—which all must admit who are not prepared to repudiate our whole history from the beginning,—and if, under this Divine appointment, the Church of God had originally a recognized Divine commission to proclaim to this nation the One Catholic and Apostolic Truth, the "One Faith" "once delivered to the Saints," let us ask, can the Truth of God, can His commission given to His Church, can His appointment made concerning this nation, be rendered invalid by *any rebellion of man*, of any portion of the nation, however large,

nay of the whole nation, against His Truth, His commission, His appointment? To maintain this, were to set man's will above the will of God, man's power above the power of God. Is it because one man idolatrously prostrates himself before images, relics, and the creaturely element of bread, that idolatry has ceased to be a sin, and the commandment of God which prohibits it, has lost its force and obligation? Is it because another man, unable to "endure sound doctrine," "having itching ears," "heady and high-minded," chooses to walk in the devious paths of ~~unpiety~~, that the Church, the Body of CHRIST, has ceased to be One, her Faith One, and the SPIRIT that dwelleth in her, ONE SPIRIT, the author, not of confusion, but of peace? Is it because a Gallio "careth for none of these things," that the Truth of God has ceased to be precious, His Law to be binding; that the eternal life which God has given us in His Son, has become an unreality, a mere figment of the brain? Or is it because an Infidel dares even to "blaspheme that worthy Name by the which we are called," that therefore that Name ceases to be "Holy and Reverend," and He Whose name it is, the Maker and Judge of all, the Sovereign LORD and KING of Heaven and earth? If no waywardness, no rebellion of man, can set aside the reality of God's Being and Power, or annul the validity of His decrees,—it is plain that no amount of defection from the true Church, no amount of repudiation of God's Holy Truth, can release the Church from the obligation imposed upon her by her Divine commission, or the nation from the allegiance which it owes to God, to His Holy Truth, and His Holy Church. Such is the plain, logical conclusion of common sense when applied to the question in hand; and that conclusion is abundantly borne out in the conscience of every man by the irresistible testimony of the SPIRIT of Truth, if we will only withdraw ourselves from the influence of this world's clamour, that would fain overbear our better convictions, and ask ourselves what our duty is, in the sight of "Him Who searcheth the reins and hearts, and Who will give unto every one according to his works." (3)

It is because "the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church" is the embodiment, so to speak, of the Church's duty in this im-

(3) Rev. ii. 23.

portant field of her labours, that I confidently appeal to you on its behalf, earnestly exhorting you to give to it your most strenuous support. Never was that support more needed, in order to enable the Society to discharge its duty,—which is the duty of the Church as the Teacher of the nation,—towards the little ones of her own fold, and not towards them only, but towards every child that can be brought within reach of the Society's operations, within hearing of the Church's voice.

This duty the Society discharges, specifically, in two ways. First, it discharges that duty by serving as a bulwark which has hitherto been found insurmountable, against erroneous, latitudinarian, irreligious schemes of national education. Attempts have been long and perseveringly made on the part of the State,—or rather, I should say, by a powerful party in the State,—to induce the Church to surrender her Divinely derived authority as the Teacher of the nation, and to yield herself as an instrument in the hands of a latitudinarian State authority for the promotion of what is called "general," or "secular" education, in connexion with which it is thought more than sufficient justice to the Church that it is proposed to tolerate the distinctive teaching of the Church as a sectarian addition. Against these attempts the National Society has lifted up its voice in remonstrance, and exerted its powerful influence. It has done more than this. The aggression upon the Church's educational office was insidiously made in the form of offers of pecuniary assistance, contingent upon the surrender of the Church's character in each individual case in which that assistance was, for certain permanent purposes, sought and obtained. The National Society, by the assistance which it, likewise, offers, but upon very different terms,—upon the condition that the children in each school receiving such assistance are to be carefully instructed in the principles of the Church, according to her authorized Formularies,—has neutralized the temptation, which in many instances might have been much more powerful, had the promoters of schools for the poor been dependent exclusively upon the assistance offered by the State on terms inconsistent with a correct apprehension of the Church's duty and responsibility in this matter. Thus the past services of the National Society fully entitle it to your support. And that support those who have the cause of sound Church

education at heart, will the more cheerfully accord to it, since at this moment the attempt to dislodge the Church from her position as the Teacher of the nation, is being renewed in a manner more insidious and more menacing than at any former period. What is now proposed is, not merely to hold out a bribe to the managers of Church schools, to induce them to surrender the Church's educational authority; it is proposed to subject those by whose voluntary contributions Church schools are at present in a great measure supported, to the payment of a compulsory school-rate available for schools of all creeds, from which Church schools shall receive their proportional share of support only on such conditions as are wholly inconsistent with the character of a Church school; one of those conditions being, that the right of repudiating the Church's religious teaching shall be formally recognized as a rule of the school, and religion thus placed, with the Church's consent and sanction, even in the eyes of those who accept her teaching, on a footing, not of Divine authority, but of human self-will. The resistance which will, no doubt, be offered to this proposal on the part of the Church will derive no small portion of its strength, and, by God's blessing, of its success, from the circumstance that the National Society affords a legitimate rallying point for the concentration and exertion of the Church's power and influence.

But it is not on this ground alone that the National Society is entitled to your hearty and liberal support. In the course of its operations,—a detailed account of which has been furnished to you,—the National Society demands a guarantee that the instruction imparted in the schools connected with it, shall be based on the Formularies of the Church, and especially on the Catechism provided for that purpose, and shall have for its object to instil into the minds of all the children received into those schools the pure, scriptural, and apostolic doctrine of our Church. In this respect, too, the Church stands deeply indebted to the Society for the wisdom and firmness which those who administer its affairs have evinced on a recent emergency. An attempt was made to induce the Society to relax the guarantee which it at present exacts, and to extract from its governing body such an interpretation of its "Terms of Union" as would have opened *the door to the principle that parents who themselves repudiate*

the Church's teaching, had a right to send their children to Church schools, on an understanding that, partially or wholly, the religious teaching of the Church is to be withheld from them. This proposal has been rejected by the Committee of the National Society. While declining to interfere with the discretion of the managers of Church schools, as to the course to be adopted in regard to those personal questions and answers of the Catechism which a child not baptized within the pale of the Church cannot, without untruth, repeat, the Committee of the Society has insisted upon the fundamental principle, that children educated in Church schools are to be educated in the principles of the Church. To receive the child of a Separatist into a Church school on the understanding that he is, in such wise as his case requires, to be instructed in the principles of the Church, is not only allowable, but is in strict accordance with the missionary character of the Church, and with her duty towards those who are without her pale; to receive such a child on the understanding that he is to be trained up as a Separatist, and that the heresy or schism in which his parent is involved, is to be respected in the person of the child, as a sacred birth-right, and as a different form of truth, would be a base denial of the Church's Faith, a direct countenance given to those "erroneous and strange doctrines" which every one of her Ministers has, at his ordination, solemnly vowed that he will do all in his power to "banish and drive away." It is on this distinction that the National Society takes its stand. It is tolerant, and, in the true sense of the word, "liberal," by offering the blessings of a sound religious education to all who are willing to receive it. But it is faithful also in refusing to handle the Word of God deceitfully, and, instead of teaching the Truth of God with authority, as a revelation from Him, to propose it for men's acceptance as a matter dependent on their opinion and on their caprice.

On these two specific grounds, then, my Christian brethren, as well as on the general ground of the services which it has rendered and continues to render, in promoting the establishment, and assisting in the maintenance and improvement, of Church schools throughout the land, the National Society claims your support;—*first, as a bulwark against latitudinarian aggressions upon the Church's proper office and Divine commission, as the Teacher of*

the nation,—secondly, as a guarantee for the efficient execution of that office, in all tenderness to individuals, but at the same time in strict and faithful adherence to the immutable principles of revealed Truth, to the doctrines of the One Catholic and Apostolic Faith, “the Faith once delivered to the Saints.” And while I appeal to you for your pecuniary contributions, let me ask you to give to the Society, moreover, what is of still greater value in the sight of God, your fervent prayers, that the Society may continue to prosper, and that those to whom the guidance of its affairs is committed, including all the Chief Pastors of our Church, may be endued with wisdom and ghostly strength, to carry out the important principle embodied in the exhortation: “*Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this Law; for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.*”

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A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE DISTRICT CHAPEL
OF THE HOLY TRINITY, ROEHAMPTON,

On the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity, Nov. 13th, 1853.

BY THE
REV. G. E. BIBER, LL.D.,
PERPETUAL CURATE OF ROEHAMPTON.

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THE WRATH OF THE LAMB:

or,

THE DOCTRINE OF EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT SET FORTH IN THE GOSPEL.

"The wrath of the LAMB."—Rev. vi. 16.

Who shall fathom the depth of the Divine counsel declared in these words of strange and terrible import?—of strange import, because the idea of wrath seems so far removed from all the ideas which we usually associate with the character of Him Who has revealed Himself unto us as the LAMB of GOD;—of terrible import, because fearful beyond all power of expression, or measure of thought, must that wrath be, the execution of which is not stayed by the infinite love testified and acted out in the sacrifice of the Only-begotten SON of GOD. But however strange the association of the term “wrath” with the name of “the LAMB” may sound to our ears,—however terrible may be the impression made upon our minds by the thought of wrath as infinite as is “the love of CHRIST which passeth knowledge,”—certain it is, that in these brief and simple words, “*the wrath of the LAMB*,” is revealed unto us the fact that He Who, at His first coming in great humility, gave Himself upon the cross “a propitiation for the sins of the whole world,” will, at His second coming with power and great glory, execute wrath upon all who, in that day, shall be obnoxious to the avenging justice of a Holy and Sovereign GOD. And not only is the fact, that the same LORD JESUS CHRIST who once descended from Heaven to save the world, shall descend a second time to judge the world, set forth in those words: in them is declared at the same time a great, a most important truth,—the truth, namely, that in the infinite perfection of GODHEAD there is no contradiction, no antagonism, between love and wrath; that love and wrath, both infinite, as is everything that belongs to God, are united in the DIVINE BEING,—a truth which could not have been presented to our

minds in a more striking and forcible manner than by the statement of the fact, that the ETERNAL SON, Who is the exponent of the love of God, is likewise the exponent of His wrath.

It is by fixing our eyes upon this fact,—by letting the truth which it embodies sink deep into our minds,—that we shall be preserved from a twofold danger, from an alternative snare (if such an expression may be permitted) of Satan:—the danger, on the one hand, of indulging in such notions of the love of God, shown forth in and by His SON JESUS CHRIST, as shall cause us to disregard, to underrate, or to disbelieve altogether, the intimations of the terrible wrath of God about to be revealed against ungodly and impenitent sinners;—the danger, on the other hand, of stumbling at the thought of an execution of wrath as infinite as is the love of God in CHRIST, of our casting ourselves down headlong into the abyss of unbelief and rebellion against God, and so defrauding ourselves of that “great salvation” which His love has purchased for us. In order that neither by the contemplation of the love of God we may be made unmindful of His wrath, nor by the contemplation of the wrath of God doubtful of His love, it behoves us to contemplate both together, united as they are in the infinite perfection of the Divine character, united in the revelation of that character in the person of HIM Whose coming to judgment is declared in the words: “*the wrath of the LAMB.*”

With the impression of that great fact, and of the great truth which it exhibits, upon our minds, let us, my Christian Brethren, in humble reliance on the gracious assistance of God’s HOLY SPIRIT, approach one of the deepest questions involved in our most holy faith,—a question most perplexing to many minds, and which has, at different times in the history of the Church Catholic, and quite recently in our own Church, given rise to great and sore searchings of heart, and to much agitation and controversy,—the question, namely, of the eternal duration of the punishment of the wicked, whether angels or men. As I have ever deemed it my duty, on occasions when important truths have been impugned, or grave errors have been propounded, to do what in me lay,—according to the charge committed unto me, of watching for your souls as one that must give account,—that you may be provided with the armour of truth against the assaults of error, *so I feel it incumbent on me now,—with the help of God, “as of the ability which He giveth,”*—not only to warn you not to give

heed to daring speculations and plausible fallacies on so awful a subject, but to place before you such evidence from God's Holy Word, as may serve to establish you, in regard to it, in the truth of the Gospel.

Before entering upon an examination of the data for arriving at a correct conclusion, touching the question of the eternal duration of the punishment of the wicked, which are contained in God's Holy Word, it may not be unprofitable, nor inappropriate, that I should suggest to your minds a few considerations, calculated to pave the way for a more dispassionate and more reverent examination of the Scriptural evidence on the subject, and for a more ready and more submissive reception of the doctrine which that evidence goes to establish.

It is assumed by those who repudiate the idea of never-ending, of eternal or everlasting punishment, that the infliction of penal suffering without intermission and without termination, upon any of His creatures, is irreconcilable with the character of God, as a God of love. This, however, plausible as the objection appears to be, is after all no more than a gratuitous assumption,—an assumption which a little reflexion will show to be both illogical and irreverent. It is illogical, first, because it proceeds on the supposition that there is a contradiction, an antagonism, between different attributes of the Divine character,—a supposition manifestly inadmissible, because incompatible with the eternal and unchangeable perfection of that character;—secondly, because it deals unequally with the attributes of the Divine character, as well by recognizing His love, His mercy as infinite, while it sets limits to His justice and His wrath, as by regarding the former only as titles to the unreserved homage of His creatures, while the latter are viewed in the light of drawbacks upon His adorable perfection. The distinction so made between attributes of the Divine character which we contemplate with complacency, and attributes which we contemplate with repugnance, is, moreover, not only illogical, but irreverent in the extreme. Indeed, the whole process of subjecting the character of God to the scrutiny and judgment of our mind,—of pronouncing upon what things are, and what things are not, in our opinion, compatible or reconcilable with each other in His character,—is an act of *glaring irreverence*.

As far as they bear upon the abstract being of God Himself,

the obvious reply to all such speculations is: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the ALMIGHTY unto perfection?"⁽¹⁾ If we must needs confess that we cannot, it follows that speculations of this nature are to be eschewed by us, not only because they are, as has been already observed, irreverent, but because they never can lead to a satisfactory result; —on the contrary, they must unavoidably entangle us in endless perplexities, and lead us to most erroneous conclusions. Our only safe course is, to confine our thoughts concerning the character of God strictly within the limits of what He has revealed to us concerning it, which is, in reference to the point in hand, the union of the two attributes of love and wrath, as set forth in those pregnant words: "*the wrath of the LAMB.*"

And as far as they bear upon the relation in which we stand to God, the reply to such speculations on His character, as exhibited in His dealings with His creatures, is: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"⁽²⁾ Most assuredly it does not become any of God's creatures to discuss either the consistency of His proceedings with His own character, or their justice and fairness towards themselves; least of all does it become sinful man, who has no standing ground before God, except by a special act of Divine mercy and condescension, to argue upon the ways of God, and to adjudicate upon their justice and propriety. All we have to do, is reverently to bow our heads, and penitently to smite our breasts, before Him, and in all lowliness of mind and contrition of spirit to submit ourselves to His Holy will and counsel,—whatever that may be,—as declared unto us in His Holy Word. Whatever in that Holy Word He has revealed, is true, because He has revealed it; and whatever He has declared that He has done, or will do, is right, because He has done, or purposes to do, it. It is not our place to offer any opinion, to pass any judgment, upon it; our business is simply to hear, and to regulate our conduct according to what we hear. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

While these considerations may serve to restrain us from irreverent, and withal useless, and worse than useless, from perilous speculations on the question of the eternal duration of the punishment of the wicked, as affecting the character of God, both in

(1) Job xi. 7.

(2) Rom. ix. 20.

Himself, and in His dealings with His creatures, there are other considerations, connected with the condition of the creature, which will go far to clear away the difficulties and objections with which the idea of eternal, that is of never-ending punishment is surrounded. The creature, as such, is necessarily dependent on God the CREATOR, for its existence, and not only for its existence, but for the quality of that existence, whether happy or unhappy. The creature which is in harmony with the purpose of its creation, whose will is in unison with the will of God, is necessarily happy; the creature which is at variance with the purpose of its creation, whose will is in opposition to the will of God, is necessarily unhappy. "God is a consuming fire,"^(*) and if any of His creatures, having placed themselves in opposition against Him, are not "consumed,"—that is, reduced to a state of existence denuded of everything, except the intolerable sense of existence opposed to God, and exposed to the terrible fire of His flaming vengeance,—the mitigation of this extremity of punishment can only be the result of an interposition of His mercy. In any case in which, and to any extent to which, there is such a mitigation of the eternal vengeance which is the necessary consequence of rebellion against Him who is "a consuming fire," that mitigation is the effect of a restraint put by God Himself upon the operation of His wrath. But to that restraint, to the interposition of mercy of which it is the result, the creature has no claim whatever. The free-will with which the creature is endowed, gives to it the power of rebelling against God; but it confers on it no right to rebel. There is no "right of insurrection" in that monarchy whereof God the CREATOR is SOVEREIGN KING, and of which all His creatures are the subjects. That God does so restrain His wrath, that He places His rebellious creatures in circumstances of merciful mitigation of the wretchedness inseparable from rebellion against Him, we know to be a fact. It is our own case; we know it therefore from experience: but we know it, likewise, from His Holy Word, in which He has made us acquainted, moreover, with the purpose of that mitigation. That purpose is, to afford an opportunity for the application of a remedial process, having for its object the restoration of the creature to a state of harmony with the original purpose of its crea-

(*) Heb. xii. 29.

tion, of conformity to the Divine will, and, consequently, of happiness. If the creature, abusing the goodness of God, despising the offer of restoration, resists the remedial process,—the case of the impenitent, the reprobate mind,—there is no longer any object in the restraint which God has put upon the operation of His wrath against the rebellious creature; and that wrath taking full effect, accordingly, constitutes the vengeance of eternal fire. In all this there is nothing that affords just cause, or even a plausible pretext, for saying that the creature is hardly dealt with; on the contrary, a full measure of justice, and not of justice only, but of mercy, is meted out to the creature. To contend that God should continue and repeat this restraint upon His wrath against the rebellious, in the case of each individual creature, so long as it shall please that creature to resist Him, to abuse and to despise His mercy, would be to require God to make Himself, His Sovereignty, and His purpose, indefinitely subservient to the waywardness of His rebellious creatures,—a claim which even the most reckless reprobate will hardly venture to set up against the ALMIGHTY.

From these preliminary considerations it appears, that while all speculation on the compatibility of eternal punishment with the character of God is inadmissible, an examination of the question as it appears on the side of the creature, not only does not militate against the idea of the eternal punishment of the wicked and impenitent, but leads to the conclusion that such a state of punishment is their obvious, their necessary doom.

We now pass on to the consideration of what Holy Scripture expressly teaches us to believe on the subject. Here it is, first of all, proper that we should distinguish between the case of Satan and other fallen angels, and the case of the sinful progeny of Adam. Of the dealings of God with the former we know nothing, except that they are irrevocably doomed to endure the vengeance of eternal fire. Concerning some of them we are taught that they are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day;”⁽⁴⁾ while concerning others we are taught that they are permitted for a season to exercise an influence over this world of ours;⁽⁵⁾ but that a time

(4) Jude 6.

(5) 1 Peter v. 8, 9; Eph. ii. 2; vi. 12; 1 Tim. iv. 1; Rev. xvi. 14.

is coming when Satan and his evil angels shall be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,"—the "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."⁽⁶⁾

Of the dealings of God with the sinful progeny of Adam we are more largely informed. We learn that death, not only bodily, but spiritual death, involving a state of suffering for the soul in the place of separate spirits after its severance from the body,⁽⁷⁾ was, as had been predicted, the consequence of Adam's transgression.⁽⁸⁾ We learn further, that God has provided a remedy for these consequences of man's fall; a remedy for the reception of which preparation was made during the ages which preceded the Advent of the Son of God, the INCARNATE WORD, the GOD-MAN; and which was fully revealed, and actually brought to bear upon man's condition, by the sacrifice of CHRIST upon the cross, as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, by His resurrection and ascension, and by the outpouring of the HOLY GHOST. The announcement of this saving purpose of God towards mankind, the call to repentance and faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the offer of the means of grace, ordained for the application, to the individual believer, of the benefits of CHRIST's death and resurrection, and of the regenerating, the renewing and sanctifying operation of the HOLY GHOST,—is the purport of the Gospel. It is an invitation addressed to all mankind to avail themselves of the atonement made for their sins by the sacrifice of CHRIST upon the cross, and of the opportunity of restoration to a state of holiness, of conformity to the Divine will. But not only is the *invitation* addressed to mankind; the same Gospel also acquaints us with the *consequences* which will result, as, on the one hand, from the dutiful and thankful reception of the grace of God in CHRIST JESUS, so, on the other hand, from its thankless and disobedient rejection. To the former the promise is given of everlasting life and glory; against the latter is denounced the punishment of everlasting death and torment.

And here it is important to observe, that God has seen fit to limit the information which He has given us in the Gospel, to the

(6) Rev. xx. 10; Matt. xxv. 41.

(7) Luke xvi. 24. The condition of "comfort" enjoyed by the souls "in Abraham's bosom" was an exceptional state, growing out of the anticipation by *faith* of the work of Christ, whose day Abraham "rejoiced to see."

(8) Gen. ii. 17; Rom. v. 12.

alternative presented to those to whom the Gospel is actually preached. In what manner He is dealing, and purposes to deal, with those to whom the Gospel has not been preached, and for whom, as well as for those to whom it is preached, CHRIST "gave Himself a ransom,"^(*) is a question on which God has not vouchsafed to reveal His counsel unto us, and on which, therefore, it does not become us to speculate, much less to dogmatize, or to make it a difficulty or a stumbling-block in the way of a sincere and obedient faith.

We are not called upon to account for, or to justify, the ways of God with all His creatures, or even with all mankind. This He will Himself do in the great day. Our knowledge is clearly confined within the limits of our responsibility. All that it is needful for us to know is, what will be our fate, if, having heard the Gospel of this salvation made known to us, we should fail to secure its unspeakable benefits. There is no ambiguity, no room for doubt or cavil in the Gospel, as to the fate of all such. The question "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"⁽¹⁾ is a question which must commend itself to every man's reason and conscience as a question altogether unanswerable. If, God having sent His Only-begotten Son into the world, to the end that "whosoever believeth in HIM should not perish, but have everlasting life," men will neglect the salvation so provided for them, it is plain that for such there is and can be no help, no escape from everlasting perdition. "When the LORD Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels," it will be, as, on the one hand, "to be glorified in His Saints," so, on the other hand, to "take vengeance in flaming fire on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our LORD Jesus CHRIST; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the LORD, and from the glory of His power."⁽²⁾ While the righteous shall enter into life eternal, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment,"—"into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;"⁽³⁾ they "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,"⁽⁴⁾—"where their worm

(*) 1 Tim. ii. 4—6.

(1) Heb. ii. 3.

(2) 2 Thess. i. 7—10.

(3) Matt. xxv. 46, 41.

(4) Rev. xxi. 8.

dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,"⁽⁵⁾—where "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."⁽⁶⁾

It seems scarcely worth while to advert to the attempts made to evade these plain and awful declarations of the fate which awaits the unbeliever and the disobedient,—those who, in spite of the merciful and gracious invitation of the Gospel shall continue in ungodliness and impenitence,—by endeavouring to attribute to the Greek expressions which are represented in our Version by the terms "everlasting," "eternal," "for ever and ever," some other meaning than that which the analogy of Scripture itself requires to be attached to them, and which has been attached to them by the Church Catholic in all ages. This is not the place, even if time permitted it, for minute philological criticism; suffice it to say, that it can be demonstrated by abundant proofs, that the expressions in question, though sometimes denoting a period of limited duration, denote, in reference to the DIVINE BEING, an eternal existence without beginning or end, and in reference to the future condition of men and angels, both good and evil, endless duration. As regards the still subtler refinement of excluding the idea of duration altogether from the sense attached to those words of the original text of Scripture, it rests entirely on an arbitrary assumption, and cannot abide the test of a careful comparison of the many passages in which they occur.⁽⁷⁾ Besides, it is not on those expressions alone that the argument turns. We are plainly told that they who "neglect so great salvation," cannot "escape;" we are told, with equal plainness, that "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, *there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries;" we are reminded, that "he that despised Moses' law died *without mercy* under two or three witnesses," and we are bidden to consider, "of *how much sorer punishment* he shall be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite (as all unbelievers do) unto the SPIRIT of grace;" with the addition of these words of terrible warning: "We know HIM

(5) *Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.*

(6) *Rev. xiv. 9—11.*

(7) See the Note on this subject, p. 18.

that hath said, ‘Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.’ And again, ‘The Lord shall judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.”^(*) And to the same effect concerning those who, not having altogether neglected and despised this great salvation, but having received it, shall go back from it, we read, “that it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, *to renew them again unto repentance*; seeing they crucify to themselves the SON of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.”^(#) What hope can there be for those of whom it is written that *they cannot escape*,—for whom it is written that *there is no more sacrifice for sins*,—whom the Scripture declares that it is *impossible to renew again unto repentance*?

Suffer not yourselves, then, to be deluded, my Christian Brethren, by the vague notion of a further “sacrifice for sin,” a further “renewal unto repentance,” a further way to “escape,” if you should “neglect so great salvation,” “do despite unto the SPIRIT of grace,” or, after “having tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, fall away.” “Be not deceived. GOD is not mocked.”⁽¹⁾ Terrible is the wrath of an offended CREATOR; far more terrible, boundless, ineffable, even as His love, is “the wrath of the LAMB.”

Now, unto HIM that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise GOD our SAVIOUR, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.⁽²⁾

(*) Heb. x. 26—31.

(#) Heb. vi. 4—6.

(1) Gal. vi. 7.

(2) Jude, 24, 25.

NOTE
ON THE SENSE OF THE WORDS *aīōv*, *aīōvios*.

The confused and erroneous notions propounded on the question of the eternity of punishment, are, in no small measure, the result of inattention to the proper sense of the words *aīōv*, *aīōvios*. That sense is,—singularly enough, considering some of the theories advanced on the subject,—*the idea of duration*. Aristotle (*De Caelo, Lib. i. c. 9, al. 11.*) so defines it:—“*The term which embraces the time of life of every being, beyond which according to its nature there is nothing, is called the aīōv of each being; and by parity of reason, the term of existence of the whole heaven (which Aristotle conceived to be eternal, aīōs) and the term which embraces the whole infinite time and infinity, is the immortal and Divine aīōv, being so named from aīē aīōv (being always, ever existing).*”

According to this definition of the word, it is evident that the question whether it denotes limited duration, or duration without limits, depends altogether upon the nature of the being, or state, in reference to which it is employed. When speaking of a being whose existence has a beginning and an end, it signifies *limited duration*; when speaking of a being whose existence has a beginning, but no end, it signifies *everlasting duration*; when speaking of the Being whose existence has neither beginning nor end, it signifies *eternal duration*. In all these three senses it is used in classic authors; sometimes of the life of a single human individual; sometimes of the whole period of the world's existence from its commencement; sometimes of the future period of the world's existence, whether conceived to be terminable or interminable; and sometimes, when applied to the Divine Being, it is employed in the sense of *eternity*.

In the same manner it is used in the Septuagint version, as the equivalent of the Hebrew words, **תִּבְנֵה**, which signifies properly “time hidden,” whether past or future, or both past and future; and **תִּבְנֵה**, which signifies properly “continuance of existence.” A volume might be written on the various senses which these words, and their Greek representative, *aīōv*, with its derivative *aīōvios*, bear in the Old Testament, according to the context in which they occur. Examples are,—the past ages of the world, Ecol. i. 10, “of old time, which was before us,” literally, “the ages, *aīōn*, which were before us;”—the entire duration of this visible world, Ecol. i. 4, “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever,” literally, “abideth for the age, *aīōn*,” i.e. its appointed term of existence. In reference to the history of God's chosen people, the term *aīōn* is used to denote a variety of periods, as, for instance, the term of possession of the land of promise, the term of the Mosaic covenant, the term of the Aaronic priesthood, the term of Solomon's temple, and other limited periods, both retrospective and prospective, of which instances innumerable might be quoted.

On the other hand the terms are of no less frequent occurrence in reference to the existence of God, as in the following passages, selected out of many of a similar character:—Is. xl. 28, God's *aīōvios* “the everlasting God,” Hebr., **תִּבְנֵה עַתָּה**, literally, “the God of eternity;”—Deut. xxxii.

40, "I live for ever," literally, "throughout the *Aion*;"—Dan. xii. 7, "He that liveth for ever," literally, in the Hebrew, "the Living One of the *Olam*," in the Greek, "liveth throughout the *Aion*;"—Ps. xc. 2, "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God," literally "from the *Aion* to the *Aion*," Hebr., "from *Olam* to *Olam*;"—Ps. xcii. 7, 8 (a most remarkable passage, as bearing upon the question of the eternity of punishment), "the wicked shall be destroyed for ever: but Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore," where the destruction of the wicked is said to be for *Ὥ^ντη*, literally, "continuances of continuance," "durations of duration," Greek, *εἰς τὸν αἰώνα τὸν αἰώνος*, "for the *Aion* of the *Aion*," while concerning God most high the expression is *Ὕπερ*, *εἰς τὸν αἰώνα*, literally, "throughout the *Aion*." In the same manner these expressions are variously used in a multitude of passages in reference to the Sovereignty of God, His kingdom, His power, His name, His counsel, His Word, His truth, His testimonies, His love, His mercy. The same signification is attached to them in numerous passages relating to the Messiah, and His kingdom. In the celebrated prophecy, Micah v. 2, the eternal preexistence of Christ is asserted: "whose going forth have been from of old, from everlasting," literally, "from the days of the *Aion*;"—in another celebrated prophecy, Is. ix. 6, 7, Christ is called "the everlasting Father," literally, "the Father of eternity" (the Greek version is deficient in this place), and it is said that His throne shall be established "from henceforth and for ever," literally, "for the *Aion*;"—Ps. cx. 4, the priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek is thus announced: "Thou art a priest for ever," literally, "for the *Aion*." Similar language is used in many prophetic passages in reference to the new covenant, the new creation, the heavenly Jerusalem, the kingdom of the Saints, and generally the eternal world which is to succeed this present world. In Dan. xii. 2, 3, the state of the righteous after the resurrection is described as a state of "everlasting life," *ζωὴν αἰώνος*, in which they shall "shine as the stars for ever and ever," literally, "for the *Aions*, and still;" that of the wicked, on the contrary, as a state of "everlasting shame and contempt," *βεδούφει καὶ αἰωνίην αἰώνος*.

In strict accordance with the sense attached to these words in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, is the use of them in the New Testament, in numerous passages, of which the Rev. Dr. Jelf, in his recent pamphlet on this subject, has given a careful and complete analysis, and of which it will suffice here to indicate a few examples. We find the term *αἰών* employed in the New Testament, in the sense of limited duration, in reference to this present world, Tit. ii. 12; to its transient concerns, Matt. xiii. 22; its fashion, Rom. xii. 2; its rulers, Satan and the powers of evil, 2 Cor. iv. 4, Eph. vi. 12; and to its termination, Matt. xiii. 39. A striking antithesis between the present or transitory, and the future or eternal world, literally "this *Aion*, and the coming *Aion*" (comp. Mk. x. 30), occurs in our Lord's declaration concerning the unpardonable sin, Matt. xii. 32, where it is particularly to be noted that in the parallel passage of St. Mark (iii. 29), it is said that the sin in question (which, according to the text of St. Matthew, will not be forgiven either in this, or in the coming *Aion*), shall not be forgiven "for ever," *εἰς τὸν αἰώνα*, but that those who commit it, are subject to "eternal damnation" *αἰώνιος κόλπος*. Further, the term is used of bygone ages of this world, Lk. i. 70; Rom. xvi. 25; as well as in reference to eternal predestination, described as the predestination of the *Aions*, Eph. iii. 11; and as predestination anterior to the *Aions*, 1 Cor. ii. 7; or to the *Aionian* times, 2 Tim. i. 9.

The same terms are applied, also, in the New Testament, to the Divine Being, Rom. xvi. 26; 1 Tim. i. 17; Rev. iv. 9; and specially to the person

of the Son, Heb. xiii. 8 ; and of the Holy Ghost, Heb. ix. 14 ; to His kingdom, power, and glory, Matt. vi. 18 ; to the new covenant in Christ, Heb. xiii. 20 ; and to the Gospel of Christ, Rev. xiv. 6.

Lastly, the same terms are variously employed to denote that enduring state,—whether of life, of bliss and glory, by the consummation of God's purpose of love in Christ Jesus, or of death and torment under the hand of His vengeance,—which shall succeed the present *Aion*. Sometimes the word *Aion* is used, in reference to that world and state, in the singular, Jn. vi. 58, sometimes in the plural, Eph. ii. 7 ; and Rev. xxii. 5, where the reign of the Saints is described as enduring "for *Aions* of *Aions*." To minister an entrance into that state is declared to be the purpose of the coming of Christ, Jn. iii. 15, 16 ; its full possession is represented as future, Rom. vi. 22, Gal. vi. 8, Tit. iii. 7 ; at the same time the life of that state is represented as a present gift of the grace of God, Rom. vi. 23 ; of which we are exhorted to lay hold, 1 Tim. vi. 12 ; which the true Christian already possesses, Jn. v. 24 ; vi. 47, 54 ; xvii. 3 ; a point elucidated by the remarkable passage which describes the *present gift* as "the powers of" the future state, the coming *Aion*, Heb. vi. 5. Correlative, as regards the extent of duration, with the passages referring to "eternal life," are those which designate, by the very same terms, the everlasting punishment of the wicked, as Matt. xxv. 41, 46; Heb. vi. 2 ; 2 Thessa. i. 9 ; and the passage Jude 7, with which may be compared, Jude 6, where the word "everlasting chains" is in the original not *aiōnos* but *aiōs*, the very same word which, in Rom. i. 20, is used to denote God's "eternal power and Godhead." The necessary correspondence in point of duration, of the state of the blessed and the damned, is evident, not only from Matt. xxv. 46, where *everlasting* or *eternal* life, and *everlasting* or *eternal* punishment (in both cases *aiōnos*) are placed in contrast to each other, but likewise from Jn. iii. 36, where the opposite of the state of "everlasting life" is thus described : "the wrath of God abideth upon him."

An attentive comparison and examination of the passages above referred to, and of the many more which might have been quoted, leaves room for no other conclusion than this, that the *idea of duration* is the fundamental idea of the term *aiōn*,—and that in reference to the future world, and the state therein of both the blessed and the damned, the duration denoted by it is an *endless duration*. That the spiritual gift of "eternal life" is in its essence something far deeper and more precious, than mere "endless duration," is understood and acknowledged by all who by the grace of God have been made to apprehend the reality of spiritual things; but it is no reason for wresting the term *aiōnos* from its true and proper sense, which is simply that of *duration*, and, in reference to the question in hand, that of *everlasting duration*.

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AND

THEIR CONSEQUENCES:

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OF THE HOLY TRINITY, ROEHAMPTON,

ON THE
NATIONAL FAST,

March 21st, 1855,

BY THE
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PERPETUAL CURATE OF ROEHAMPTON.

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Hear, O earth: behold I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it.—Jer. vi. 19.

When God's chosen people of old had sinned against their **LORD** and their **KING**, and by sinning had provoked Him to anger against them, it was in these remarkable words that the prophet was commissioned to announce to them the retribution which awaited them at the hands of an offended God. The whole earth was called to witness, that the **LORD** had a controversy with his people. And what was the root and ground of that controversy? The rejection of God's word and of His law was the national sin about to be visited upon them. And the form which the punishment of their sin assumed, was that the evil which they were enduring, was the fruit, the natural consequence, of their own doings.

This is most commonly, though not always, the way in which God punishes man for his iniquity; and it is so, much more frequently than we are aware of. Sometimes, indeed, it is otherwise. The event, the calamity, by which a man,—or a nation, for God deals with nations as He does with individuals,—is punished for his sin, may be wholly unconnected, as far as any chain of cause and effect to be traced between them is concerned, with the sin of which it is the punishment. In this case the connexion between the two, the sin and the punishment, is to be traced only through the omniscience and omnipotence, through the predestinating foreknowledge and the preordaining power of God. He to Whose supreme regulation all events, even those which depend on the free will of the creature, are subject, *has so wisely and wonderfully prearranged the course of events, that the event which constitutes the punishment shall happen*

the time when punishment is called for by the commission of sin. The holiness, the avenging justice of God is the connecting link at the fountainhead; it is a principle of His moral government of the world that sin shall not go unpunished, and He, the Sovereign Disposer of all events, provides such punishment as pleases HIM for the sin which has provoked His avenging justice, at the time and under the circumstances best calculated to carry home to the sinner the conviction of his sin. In the heart of the sinner the connexion between the two is established by the secret voice of conscience, which points out to the sinner his transgression, and, through the sense which the conscience has of the moral government of the world by God, leads him to recognize in his calamity a just retribution for his transgression.

In the other case, the more frequent of the two, the connexion between the sin and its punishment is traceable through a chain of cause and effect. The punishment is the result which, in the natural order of moral or physical consequence, follows from the sin. How far this connexion between the two shall be apparent to us, depends upon the extent to which we have become acquainted with the moral and physical laws established by God for the government of His creation. The man who is ignorant of the laws of his physical frame may fancy he sees a direct interposition of the predestinating Sovereignty of God in sufferings which the physician recognizes as the natural consequence of the conduct which he has pursued. The man who is ignorant of the laws by which in the moral world certain effects flow from certain causes, may in like manner attribute to a direct interposition of the Sovereignty and the avenging justice of God, events which are the direct consequence, according to the order of God's moral government of the world, of his violation of that order.

Now all the punishments which God inflicts upon His creatures have for their object to exhibit His Sovereign wisdom and power, His inviolable holiness and justice. In the former of the two cases just referred to, this is their sole object; in the latter case the punishment is intended to serve the additional purpose of illustrating the laws of His government of the moral as well as of the physical world. This twofold purpose of exhibiting His own character, and of illustrating the nature of the laws by which He governs His creation, is primarily intended in this

world of ours,—a world in which the mercy of God aims at the recovery and restoration of the sinner,—for the benefit of the transgressor himself; and it is not until the transgressor, by blinding himself against the teaching of God, by hardening his heart against the decrees of His Sovereign justice, has rendered himself incapable of deriving benefit from his punishment, that the punishment assumes the character of a final doom, whether of reprobation in this world, or of damnation in the world to come.

It is upon an honest recognition and a due consideration of these several facts—facts which no man who properly reflects upon the relation between God and His creation can gainsay,—that true and sincere repentance, and consequently the benefit to be derived by the sinner from the punishments of God depends. And it is with a view to induce in our hearts and minds such true and sincere repentance for our national transgressions, that I purpose, with the gracious assistance of God's HOLY SPIRIT, to direct your attention to the close, the striking analogy between our present condition as a nation, and the condition of God's chosen people of old at the time when He called the whole earth to witness that the evil which He brought upon them was the fruit of their own thoughts, because they had not hearkened unto His words, nor to His law, but had rejected them.

The case of God's people of old, which is, with remarkable closeness of resemblance, our case also,—is thus stated by the prophet:—

“ From the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, ‘ Peace, “ ‘ peace;’ when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when “ they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all “ ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall “ among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall “ be cast down, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, ‘ Stand “ ‘ ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths where is “ ‘ the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your “ ‘ souls.’ But they said, ‘ We will not walk therein.’ Also I set “ watchmen over you, saying, ‘ Hearken to the sound of the “ ‘ trumpet.’ But they said, ‘ We will not hearken.’ Therefor

"hear ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is—*among them*," as our version renders it, but as it ought to be rendered—in them, in these things; hear, all nations, know thou, mine own people, mine own congregation, what is in all these dispensations, what is the meaning of them all. "*Hear, O earth: "behold I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their "thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to "My law, but rejected it."*"

The first point in the charge here brought against God's ancient people is their being given to covetousness, "every one of them, from the least even unto the greatest." The existence of this sin amongst ourselves as a national sin, none will have the hardihood to deny. In the conduct of individuals, to get rich, to make gains, is considered not only as a legitimate but as a laudable purpose; with too many amongst us it is the sole, or at all events the chief, object of life. If a certain course of action is for a man's interest, if it tends to increase his worldly substance, or to prevent a diminution or sacrifice of it, that is commonly considered a sufficient justification of such a course, no matter how questionable it may be on other grounds. "*A "man has a right to advance his own interests,"—"he is not called "upon to make sacrifices,"*"—are axioms commonly received and acted upon amongst us. It is the same with regard to our conduct as a nation. Let it be shown that a certain course of policy is likely to increase our national wealth,—that is quite sufficient reason for our statesmen and legislators to adopt it. Let it be pointed out on the other hand, that a certain course of policy is likely to have an injurious effect upon our national wealth, that it would interfere with our power of industrial production and our commercial prosperity, or entail upon us a serious pecuniary sacrifice,—the objection is at once recognized as a fatal one, and every possible device is resorted to, to avoid the objectionable course.

That this our national sin of covetousness is in many ways, directly and indirectly, the cause of the disasters which have befallen us, no reflecting mind can fail to perceive. Our covetousness, our unwillingness to incur the expense of a war, and to subject our commercial prosperity to the interruptions and drawbacks which a war always brings in its train, had, to say the least of it, quite as much to do as considerations of humanity and

Christian charity, both with the reluctance of our Government to declare war, even when war had been actually commenced by the enemy,—whereby the enemy gained no small advantage,—and with the senseless peace-cry raised by the faction which, more than any other, embodies and represents the national spirit of covetousness and greediness of gain. Our covetousness, and that pride of wealth which is its natural ally in the heart of man, lay at the root of the presumptuous selfreliance with which we entered upon the war, taking it for granted that so great and wealthy a nation, a nation abounding in all the appliances which human industry and ingenuity can devise, and wealth can purchase, must of necessity be successful; while, by a striking though by no means singular inconsistency, our covetousness operated in another form, the form of injudicious parsimony, to cripple the means with which we set out upon an enterprise to the achievement of which those means were utterly inadequate. Our covetousness, and consequent unwillingness to interfere with the interests of trade, prevented us from adopting, at the commencement of the war, that system of warfare upon property which by the law of nations is recognized as a legitimate, and which generally proves a most effectual, as well as a less sanguinary mode of warfare. The same excessive tenderness for the interests of commerce withheld us at the commencement of the war from taking possession of an important town and seaport, which not only, if in our power, would have afforded a valuable place of security for our fleets and stores, but, being left in the power of the enemy, enabled him to supply his army freely with ammunition and provisions, as well as with reinforcements. Lastly, it is our covetousness that not only caused our army to be supplied with stores, and even with implements of war, of an inferior quality, but introduced into the public administration that multiplicity of checks and counter-checks, which proved, to an almost incredible extent, an obstacle to the distribution even of food and medicine when most urgently wanted; the necessaries of life being denied, though on the spot in large quantities, both to man and beast, for want of some contemptible official formality devised by the ingenuity of economists for the protection of the pockets of the people. Thus, in a variety of ways, the disastrous failure of our enterprize, and the deplorable sacrifice of life which has taken place, and which has

at last brought the nation in a suppliant attitude before the Throne of Grace, is distinctly and directly traceable to the national sin of covetousness.

But covetousness, though the first, is not the only charge brought by the prophet of old against God's ancient people, and, by a striking analogy, applicable to our own case. "From the "prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They "have healed also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, "saying, 'Peace, peace;' when there is no peace." The accusation conveyed in these words amounts to a charge of deceitful and corrupt dealing with God's truth spoken by His prophets, with God's ordinance, ministered by His priests, and of attempting, though in vain, to heal public disorders and dissensions by that hollow system of compromise, so graphically described as a cry of "'Peace, "'peace', when there is no peace.'" Again, it is impossible for any reflecting mind to avoid the conclusion that in this respect, too, the analogy between God's ancient people and ourselves holds good to an alarming extent. God's truth, God's ordinance, have ceased to be recognized by us as of Divine origin, and therefore of absolute obligation. The State has cast off its ancient allegiance to Christ, to His Holy Word, and His Holy Church; it has proclaimed as a fundamental principle, that religious truth is a mere matter of human opinion, religious worship a mere form of human invention. And while it has given to every system of error, of schism, of false doctrine, and of corrupt worship, not excepting idolatry itself, the fullest and freest scope to propagate itself, and to exercise its seductive influence, the State has kept, and persists in keeping, the Church of God in a state of oppression and of bondage, not only failing to supply her with the necessary means for the full exercise of her Divine commission, but debarring her from the power of making her temporal possessions, as well as her spiritual resources, available for the instruction and edification of the people. And even among the members of the Church herself the spirit of self-will too generally repudiates the authority of that Divine commission by which the word of God is preached and the stewardship of the mysteries of grace is exercised. It is expected of the Ministers of God that *they shall accommodate themselves to the opinions of the people, and to their often low and perverse notions of what is conducive to their own and their neighbours' spiritual improvement; that they*

shall not presume to set before the people any religious truth, or any religious ordinance in the high character of an absolute truth and an imperative ordinance. It is required of them, as the condition on which they are to exercise their ministry, that they shall subscribe and do homage to the principle of universal liberty and unbounded license in matters of religion. And all this is insisted on, under the hypocritical plea of charity, of toleration, of liberality. The utmost confusion of religious opinion and practice is recommended as the only means of securing universal peace and goodwill among men.

The consequence of all this is but too apparent. The extent to which the principle of universal agreement to differ—the modern phrase for the old cry ‘peace, peace,’ when there is no peace,—has been carried, has engendered and fostered in the minds of men a spirit of insubordination, of defiance of constituted authority, of perverse indulgence of self-will and of individual opinion, which, while within the Church herself it is exhibited in endless divisions and bitter strife, manifests itself in the government of the State by a perpetual splitting up into parties and sections of parties whose factiousness prevents any consistent and continued cooperation in the administration of public affairs, at the same time that it prompts them to perpetual and most unnatural combinations and coalitions for purposes of opposition to the existing Government. How large a share this cause has had in bringing upon us our present calamities, and in impeding every endeavour to apply a remedy, is unhappily too notorious. After having for a time been governed by a Coalition so monstrous from the incongruity of the ingredients which composed it as to cause it at first sight to appear morally impossible, we found ourselves suddenly without any Government at all, and at a most critical moment weeks elapsed before a Government of any kind whatever could be constructed. The spirit of faction, the eager pursuit of selfish and party interests, overbore in the minds of our public men the most pressing considerations of regard for the public weal. In all this we see, plainly and undeniably, the fruit of our own thoughts, the fruit of our deceitful and undutiful dealing with God’s truth and ordinance, and of the vicious state of self-will, of self-conceit and self-seeking, into which the minds of men have lapsed by degrees, *all under the pretence of an anxious desire for universal harmony and peace*, which, we are told, is not to be attained by

humble submission to the one truth and the one ordinance of God, but by the recognition of the right of every man to think and to act as seemeth good to himself.

But the prophet goes on to ask—"Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?" And he answers, "Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I shall visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the LORD." Is not this our case? When we had committed the abomination of abrogating the supremacy of God's truth and ordinance, and to proclaim instead thereof the principle of democracy in matters of religion, were we at all ashamed of what we had done? Is there to this day any disposition to be ashamed of it? So far from it, the system of universal religious license and self-will is, and continues to be, the boast of our public men, till hardly any one, at last, has the moral courage to denounce the principle as a false, a fallacious, a wicked principle; and no hope remains of the evil being corrected, and of the nation being brought back to a proper and reverent appreciation of God's truth and ordinance, but the fearful teaching of adversity,—the casting down in the day of the LORD's visitation. That visitation is now upon us, and it has so far been effectual as to induce, in the appointment of this day of national humiliation, a public recognition that we have sinned against God, and that it is for our sins that we are being visited with calamity.

But let us not deceive ourselves. The value of this act of public humiliation in the sight of God necessarily depends on the sincerity of that national repentance of which the observance of this day is the outward profession. In what frame and disposition of mind, then, do we join in that observance? Let us once more consult the words of the prophecy before us. "Thus saith the Lord, 'Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' But they said, 'We will not walk therein.' And I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Hearken to the sound of the trumpet.' But they said, 'We will not hearken.'"

Our duty, my Christian brethren, is plain. It is to admonish you to "look for the old paths where is the good way," to discard for them the new-fangled notions which the enemy of God and man has propagated among us under specious pre-

tences for the deceiving and the ruin of the nation. It is to point out to you, without fear or flinching, our grievous departure as a nation from the old paths and the good way, as the ultimate cause of our national calamities, and to exhort you to return to those old paths, to that good way. It is to warn you of the sound of the trumpet, of the indication of the judgments of God,—heavier judgments than any we have yet experienced,—impending over our heads, unless we repent and amend our ways and our doings. And how will you receive that admonition, that reproof, that exhortation, that warning? What is at this moment the secret response of your heart? Is it—"We will not walk "therein," "We will not hearken?"—Or is it an humble and contrite acknowledgment of the truth of what has now been spoken in your ears, an earnest determination to cast out from your minds the corrupt notions, the evil opinions, the fallacious principles, which have gained entrance into them, and to submit yourselves in a spirit of holy reverence to the truth and the ordinance of GOD?

The collection about to be made* will afford you a suitable opportunity, my Christian brethren, of answering that question not only by word, but by deed. The object to which your offerings will be appropriated, is to instruct the children of the poor of this hamlet in "the old paths where is the good way," and to teach them to "walk therein, that they may find rest for their souls." Cast not, I beseech you, your gifts into the LORD's treasury for this holy as well as benevolent purpose, without considering your own need of rest for your own souls, and be assured that you will never find that rest, except by walking yourselves in "the old paths where is the good way."

By doing so, and by exerting to the utmost the influence which in your several stations you possess, to induce others also to do the same, you will not only secure rest to your souls, whatever events may betide in the world around you, but you will contribute your share towards averting,—if by God's blessing it may be averted,—from our Church and nation the fulfilment of that terrible word spoken by the LORD concerning His people of old: "*Hear, O earth; behold I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it.*"

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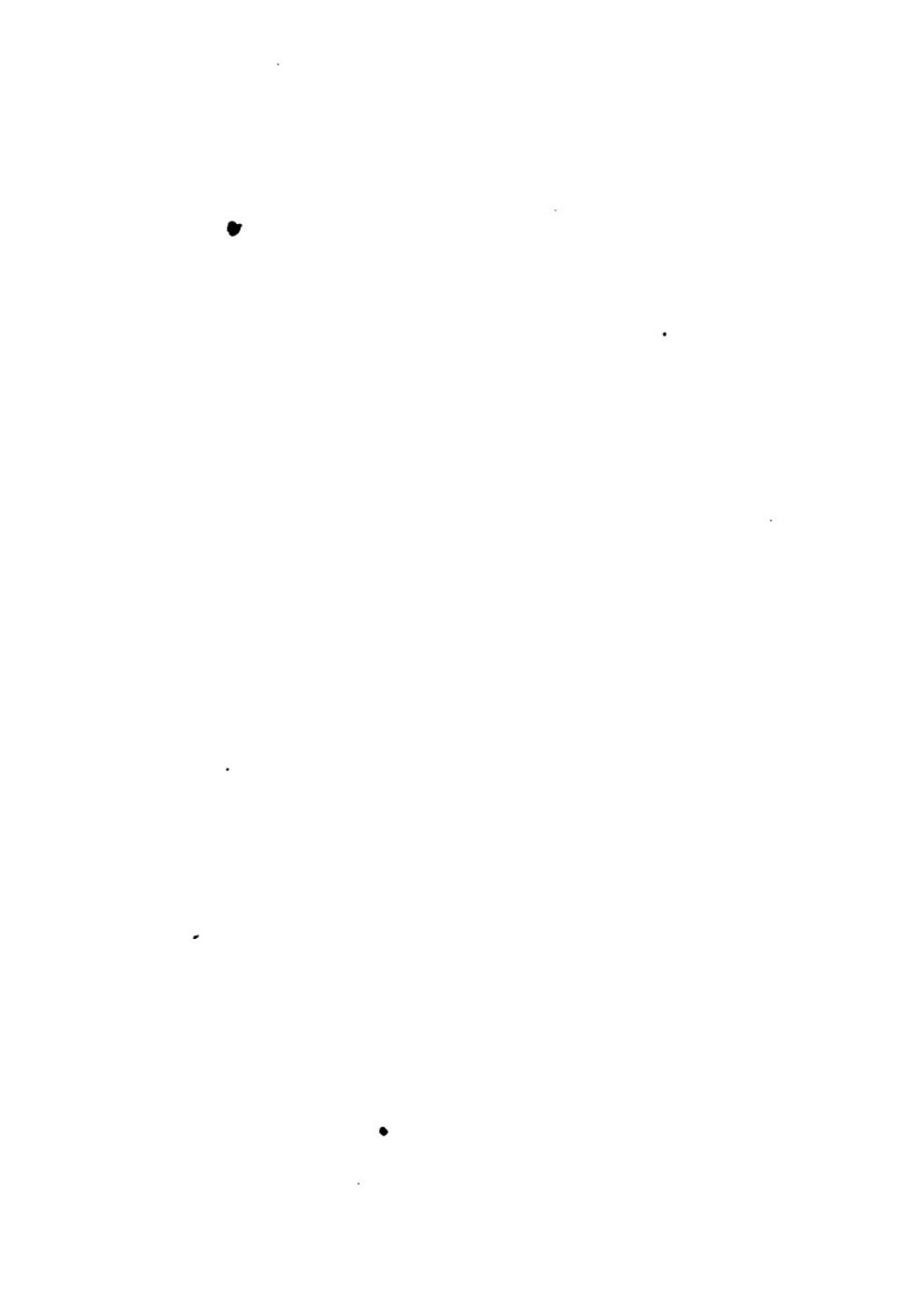


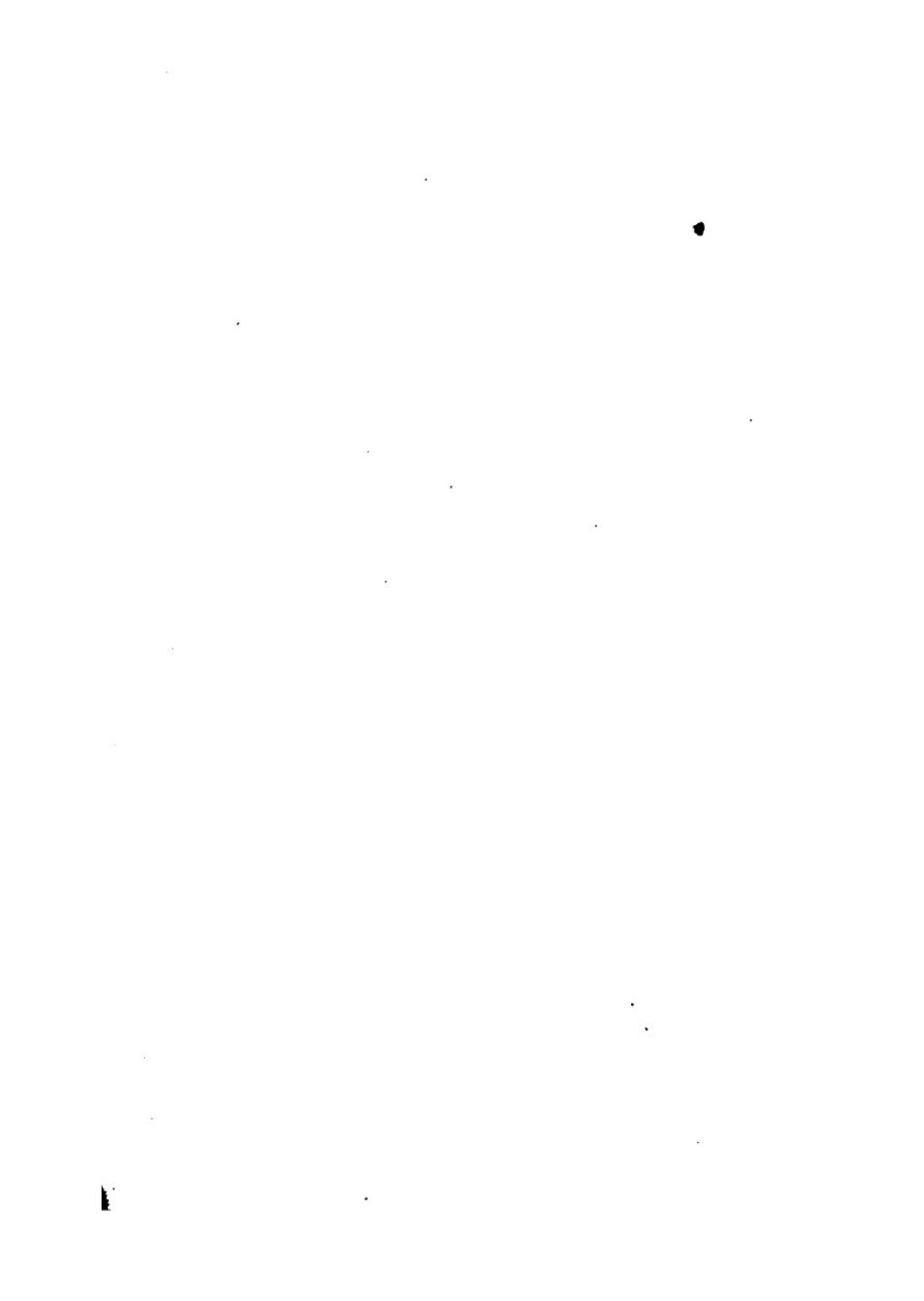










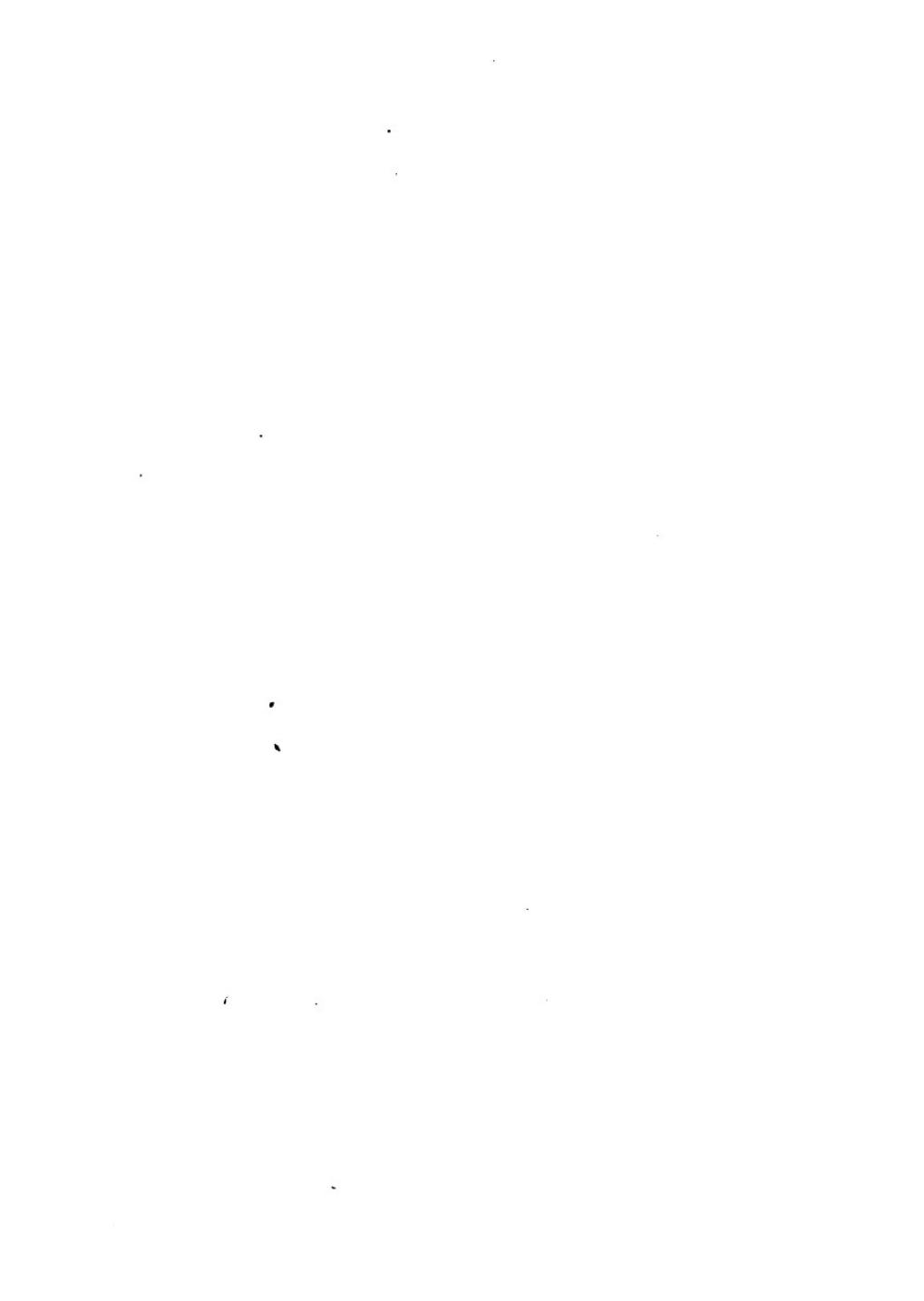






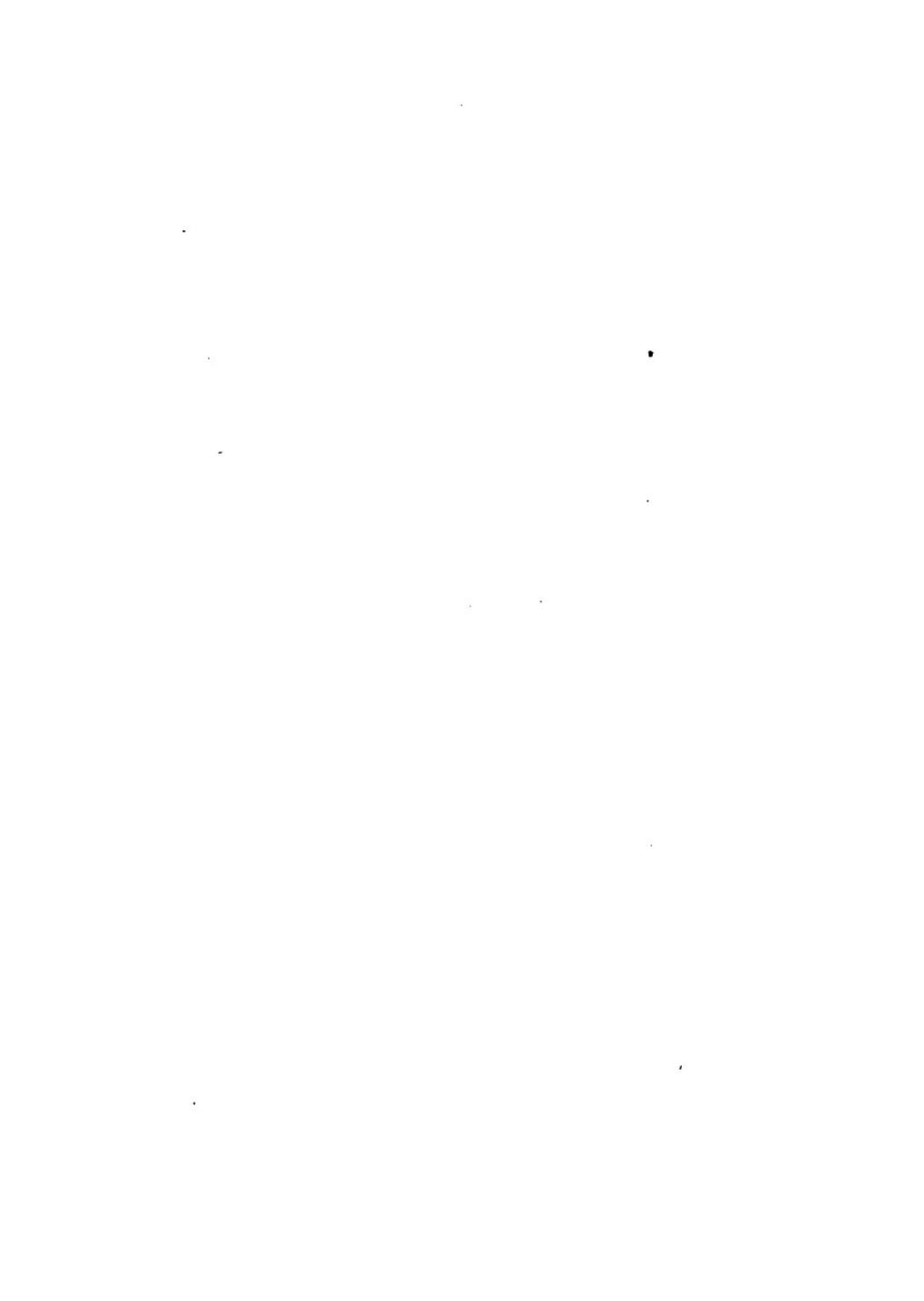


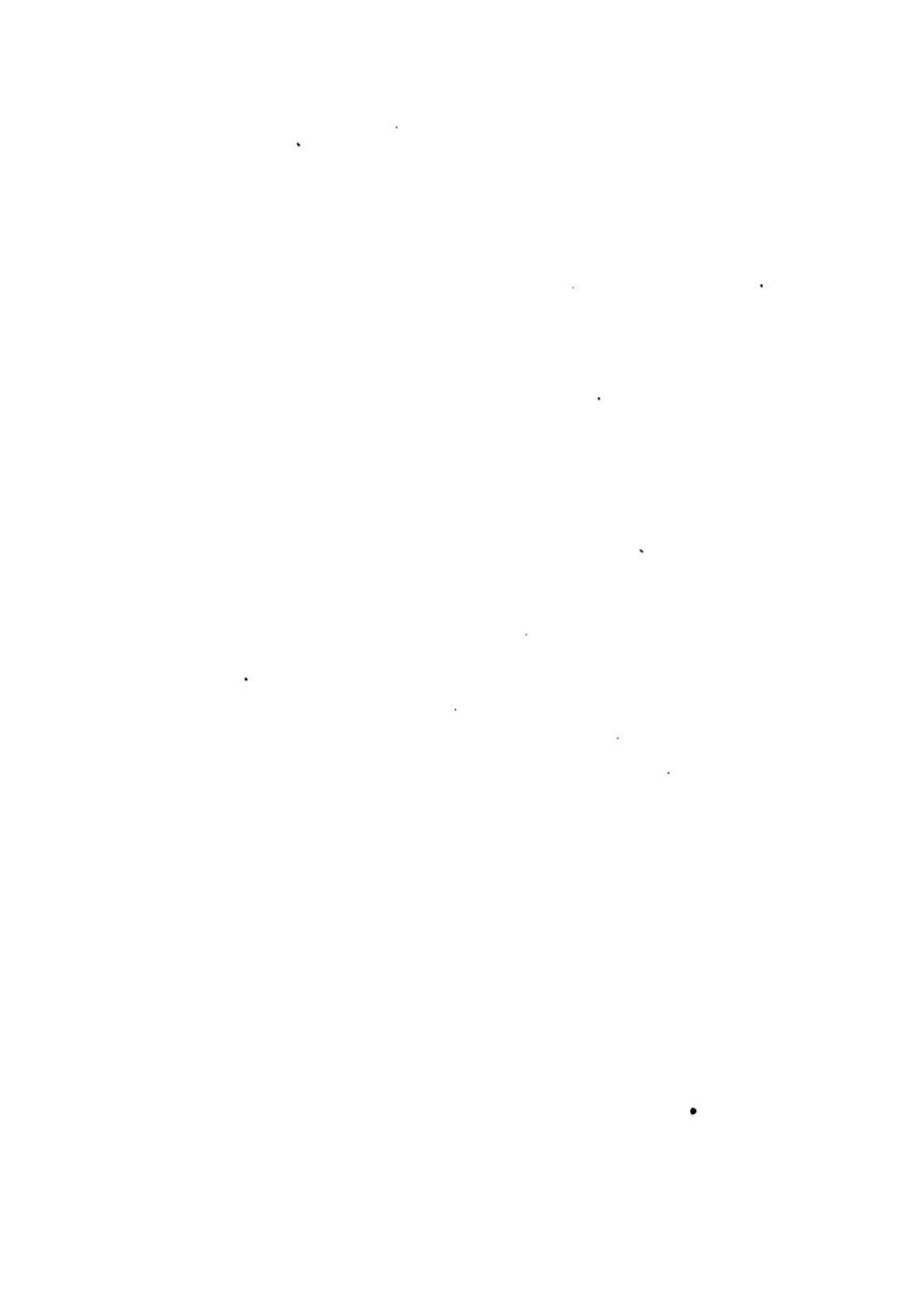


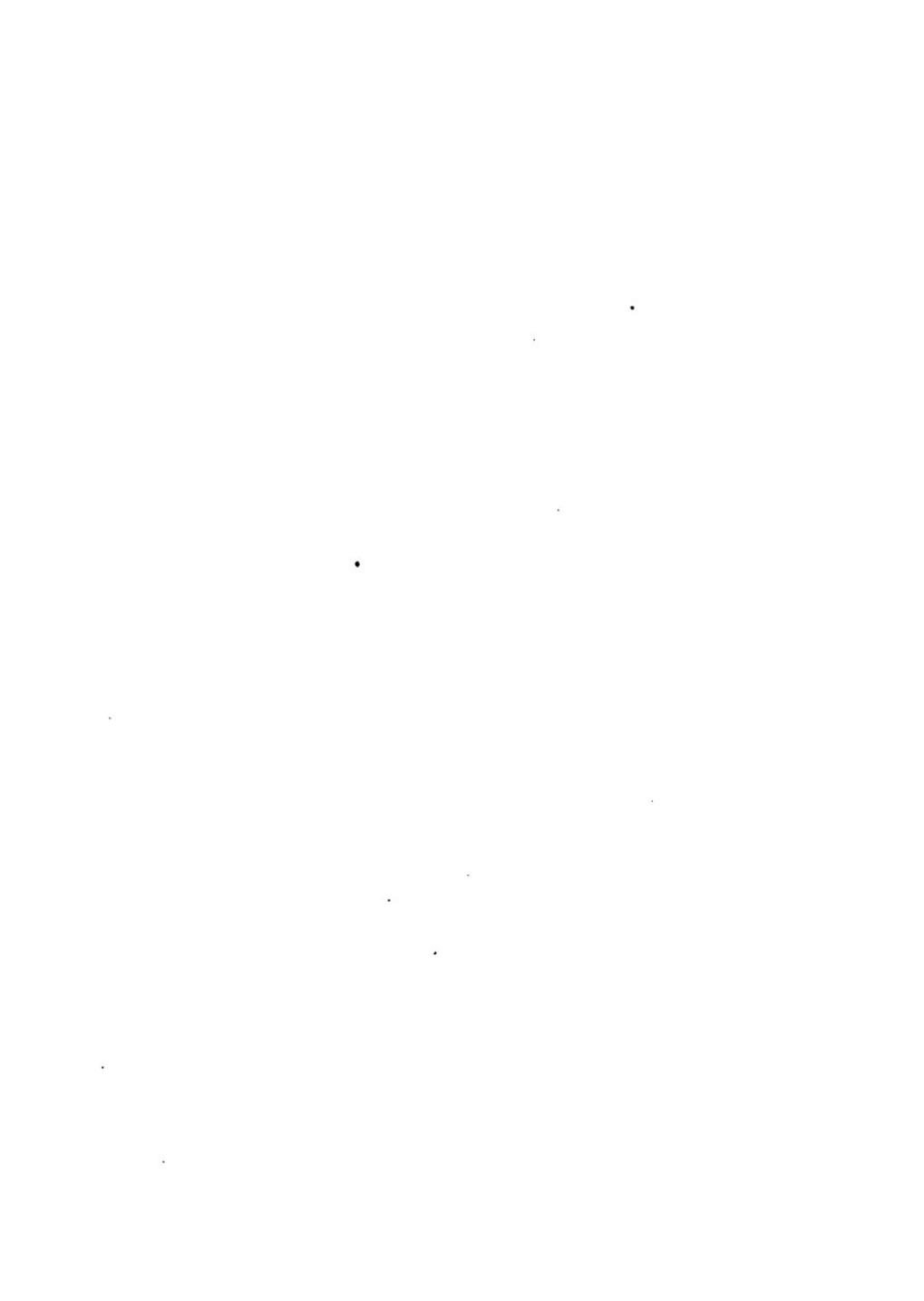




























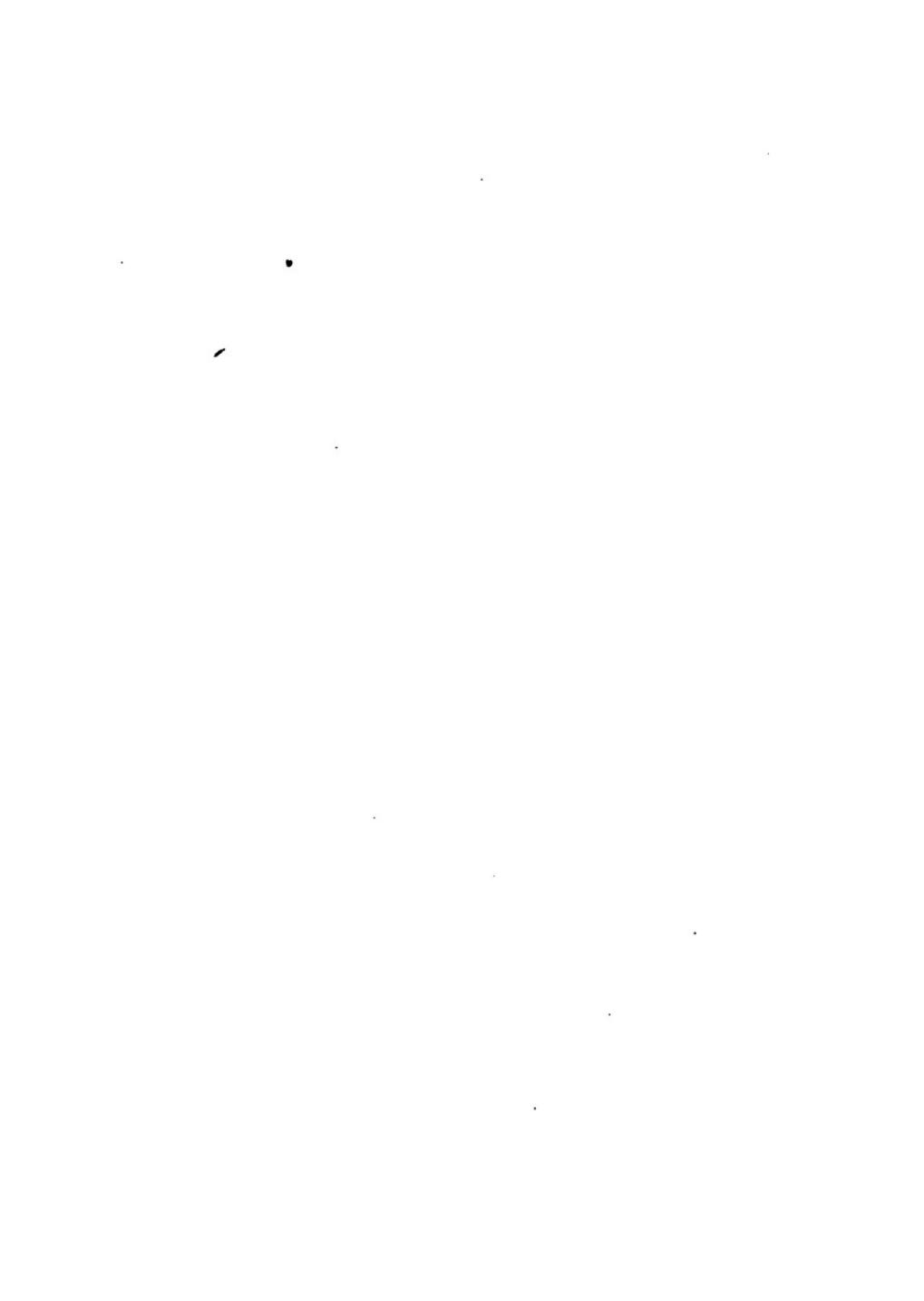
















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